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Draft of letter from W. Beaumont [Saint Louis, MO] to Thomas Lawson, Surgeon General [Washington, DC] regarding: requests leave of absence without conditions, proposed transfer to Jefferson Barracks, justification of medical officer at Saint Louis. April 14, 1839

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St Louis Mo

April 14th 1839

Sir

Your letter of the 27th Ult^o allowing me "leave" for two months under certain conditions has been received.

I regret that you should think it necessary to attach such conditions to the leave, not so much on account of the expense it may throw upon me as the consideration that seems to have prevailed with you that I am not entitled to the indulgence I requested. If for the single reason that no medical officer was disposable for the performance of duty here during my absence you had thought proper to charge the expense to me, though I might have thought it hard it would have appeared much less onerous.

I do not know what stronger claims others may have, but I am sure that my request was perfectly reasonable and if the duties upon the medical staff of the Army make so exclusive and absolute a demand upon the time of Officers that so reasonable a request cannot be complied with, there is great need of additional officers in the medical staff of the Army, but I rather think you have in this instance under-estimated my claims. Unless, however, you think proper to reconsider your decision, I may ~~then~~ be compelled to pay the expense of services here during my absence for a just regard to my interests will I believe oblige me to be about 6 or 8 weeks.

While writing I will refer to a subject to which my

attention has been called by a letter from Maj Hitchcock, in which I am informed that your views of the propriety of my station at this place do not accord with those of your predecessor, and that you appear to think Jefferson Barracks a more suitable station.

Now, my Dear Sir, without the least desire to question the correctness of your views, or the propriety of your general arrangements of the Medical Department, permit me, respectfully to ask - (and I hope you will do me the favor, candidly and promptly to answer) whether you have any such arrangement in contemplation, or even seriously think of ordering me from this to Jefferson Bks? I presume to be thus frank & explicit from agreeable recollections of former friendly associations, the confidence I feel in the candor and correctness of your disposition & from belief in your general desire to promote the greatest good of the public service, with the least prejudice and inconvenience to the individual interests of your Department.

I would ask then, how can Jeff Bks, in its present endowments, be considered a more appropriate or important station for me, or any other medical officer, of whom the same duties would be required, ~~that~~ ^{at} St. Louis? The amount & importance of the offl duties required at that station, bear no comparison with those to be performed here. There, are Gen Atkinson, his family, a handful of recruits occasionally & some few useless old soldiers, with nothing to do, but to preserve their healths, if they will, by procuring and regulating their own diet. Scarcely liable to accidents, & more seldom to disease. Spending much of the time in this City & receiving the benefits of my professional advice and prescriptions whenever wished for or requested. But here, in St Louis, are located some 6 or 7 Army officers & their families. Lt Col Brant, Majors Lee & Stewart, Capt Kingsbury, Capt Lee,

Lt Reed & Ruggles, a Recruiting Rendezvous, with its party & recruits to be presented to, examined & reported. The Arsenal with its Command - some 20 or 30 men, besides women and children, & Capt Lynington, his family & subalterns. Members of Military Conster. Sojourning Officers, under orders, & transient Members of the Army, which are neither few, nor far between. All of whom claim & receive pay free & gratuitous professional services. All these together, with the duties of Medical Surgeon for the Western Division, make the offl duties required of me here, constant & multifarious, & ten times more important, necessary & useful than can possibly be required at the Barracks in the present state of service.

Under this view of the subject, & present exigency, it is impossible to conceive the necessity or even the propriety of modifying the present arrangements, by ordering me to any other post or station, unless it be to devolve on me the necessity of making great sacrifices of interest & inclination, or of being compelled to resign my place in the Army, either of which alternations would be very unpleasant, and neither of which do I hope to be forced to.

I am, & always have been, willing & ready to perform any duty required of me - am now willing to continue to attend to those incumbent on me at this station, which are equally arduous and necessary with those of any other, & of paramount importance to most others in service.

And now, uninformed of any particular exigency - unaware of having forfeited my claims to the common indulgences, or my right (after my seniors) to a preference of stations, & conscious of having faithfully discharged my duties to the Government, I cannot acknowledge just cause, or even seriously anticipate an order of removal from this place. I presume some envious or discontented junior would be glad to see my station changed, but I know you would not

yield your official sanction to gratify any of that class.

Allow me to add here without subjecting myself to the charge of vanity or egotism, that for any professional advantages I may be supposed to enjoy here, I am not indebted to the Government but to my own character and exertions. These advantages, be they more or less are not an incident to the station but are the fruits of toil I am sure, of not talent and it is by no means certain that a successful applicant for my station as a public officer would likewise succeed to the advantages I may properly characterise as personal.

I confide in the uprightness of your disposition, & rely upon the correctness and impartiality of your judgement.

Very Respectfully yr. ob. serv.

Letter to Mr.
Surg^l Genl
Apr 14. 1839

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